Musical Style and Cultural Meaning in Nigeria: Modelling Localised Reading of Musical Performances

Ukeme Akpan Udoh
Department of Music,
University of Uyo, Uyo Nigeria
ukemeudoh@uniuyo.edu.ng

Abstract

The word 'Style' has often been neglected or relegated to the background in most discussions on African indigenous musical practices. The diversity of musical changes in style, content, and performance context has created new ways of meaning in modern Nigerian society. In a modernistic sense, musical communication is based on certain factors that are shared and conjured within past and present, including foreign and localised conjectures. In this essay, the author examines what constitutes a style, and how stylistic nuances contribute to the formation of meaning and what is communicated to the audience in community-based traditions of music. The paper analyses factors of stylistic changes and why those variations are essential to communication. The paper engages narrowly with Genre Theory and discusses how most musical performances must be read from the diversity and distinction of cultural meaning, at least, from the perspective of the Ibibio culture of Nigeria.

Keywords: Style, Performance, Musical Communication, Ibibio, Genre Theory

Introduction

The word 'Style' has often been neglected or relegated to the background in most discussions on African indigenous musical practices. More often than not, 'Style' has been used interchangeably with 'Form'. For example, in Akpabot's *Form, Function and Style* (1998), both 'form' and 'style' are identified. In this representation, the dominance of 'form' is illustrated in the emphasis on structural and social function, i.e., the fundamental elements of music: scales/melody, harmony/polyphony, rhythmic patterns, tune/text, instrumentations, transcriptions, and analyses. Looking at the similarities, as they may seem, the differences between the two are arguably distinct. Discussions available on style have focused more on compositional styles (Omojola, 1987; Butler, 2008; Omojola and Sownade, 1998; Keegan, 2010; Hall, 2019). Only a few studies have focused on studying musical style(s) and its relationship(s) to the compositional process and output (Adedeji, 2004; Udoh, 2012). Other scholars have related more closely to the term genre than style, situating their discussions within genre theory. In other words, a genre is synonymous with a style.

Superficially, most of these write-ups on style have failed to make an explicit connection between genre and stylistic analysis. For instance, in music, can a style exist without a musical practice and vice versa? The paper advancesa discussion on the concept of style as a characteristic of music communication in its right, its stylistic frame of reference, and factors that orchestrate its convergence into musical style as a modelof cultural and musical practices of the Ibibio people of Southeastern Nigeria. It examines the limited corpus of musical traditions

from the Ibibio society in which analytical generalizations are applied to other subcultures in Nigeria. The aim is to understand how and what types of musical and cultural choices are made, the indigenous concept and context of meaning or function that support these choices, and how they might be interpreted. To examine music in a social context, it is necessary to have the theoretical tools that help shed light on questions of history and culture, and their communication processes. For this reason, the paper engages with genre theory and how its functional model is ubiquitous in traditional Ibibio musical meaning and communication activity.

Genre Theory

According to Chandler (1997, p. 1), "The word *genre* comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. The term is widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics, to refer to a distinctive *type* of 'text'. The first similarity that genre has with style is the 'kind' or 'type'. Brackett (2016) suggests that "the question of genre in music is often inextricably tied to how people identify with different types of music" (p. 2). In other words, genre designations indicate or imply the assumed audience for a particular type of music, and frequently raise questions about categorisation, who produces and consumes the music. But in the context of this paper, Ibibio music as a genre in the Nigerian culture raises other modernistic concerns: How do the younger generations assume knowledge of specific music in their domain? How does communication occur, or is cultural meaning still functional? Conventionally, the idea of style like genre tends to be based on the notion that genre constitutes specific conventions of content (such as themes or settings) and/or form (including structure and style) that are shared by the texts which are regarded as belonging to specific cultures. Next is the modernistic media for shared experiences. For instance, music as a 'text' belongs to many cultures, shared conventions, and structural nuances. Thus, if we identify or generalise a music as 'Western' or 'African', the musicality in each creates a class, and each contains stylistic features even when some may be shared by different cultures. My point here is that the notion of genre as a theory is shared in the notion of style as we shall see, and examining them as useful components of culture will contribute to understanding the ethnomusicological trends in Nigeria. However, it is worthy of note that genre theory is somehow difficult, particularly in how to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another. This means that genres overlap, and there are mixed genres as highlighted in this paper. The essence is to show that although genre agrees with the notion of style as demonstrated below, it creates cultural dichotomies (African versus Western; Ibibio versus Yoruba, Christianity versus Traditional religion, etc.) that interact with music.

Concept and Context of Style in Music

According to Ammer (1987), style is "a term used for the composer's manner of treating the various elements that make up a composition — the overall form, melody, rhythm, harmony, instrumentation, etc. as well as for the performer's manner of presenting a musical composition"(p. 416). In other words, style is relatively synonymous to the structural elements of music, which is also understood as form. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician* defines Style as "manner of discourse, mode of expression, type of presentation" (Sadie, 2001, p. 638). In addition, aestheticians conceive style as surface appearance, though in music, appearance and essence are ultimately inseparable. Next, a style is a distinguishing and ordering concept for the historian, both consisting of and denoting generalities. Thus, a style can be conceived as a mode of identification or categorisation (from these definitions), which includes

the overall form, its expressive nature, or its surface characterisation. In this context, the examination of style should first be realized or localised within a specific language space. Among the Ibibio, it was challenging to find the vernacular translation for the word style. The available word *Nwuọndausuŋdaŋaenamnkpọ* literarily means 'a distinctive manner of expression' which implies that style may be seen as a synthesis of other styles. For example, Highlife music styles implicate the distinctive manner of expressions within the Highlife genre as demonstrated in the various traditional subcultures such as Yoruba, Igbo, and Ibibio including religious colorations such as Gospel Highlife. In this case, the distinctive manner of expression merges foreign and indigenous elements, comprising distinctive textual styles, harmonic styles, melodic styles, etc., which culminate into the idea of fusion or stylistic nuances in cultural and religious traditions.

Contextually, style may be seen as a conceptual unit in music, from the imaginary to the substance. This is so because music itself is a style of art compared to sculpture or drama. For example, a single note or chord on a musical instrument may have stylistic implications according to its medium (acoustic or electronic), pitch, and duration which is usually couched as timbre. Alternatively, stylistic nuances may be present in melodic and chordal phrases, section movements, sentences with different formations of cadences, and periods in Western art music culture. Thus, style manifests itself in characteristic usage of form, texture, harmony, melody, rhythm, and ethos; and it is presented by creative personalities, conditioned by historical, social and geographical factors, performing resources and conventions. These characteristics, for instance, may have completely different results and interpretations depending on the culture.

Curt Sachs submits that in speaking of the style of an epoch of culture, one is talking of import, a substantive communication from a society, which is a significant embodiment of the aspirations and inner life of its people (in Udoh, 2012, p. 67). Style speaks of communal creativity and by the act of creativity, a composer, for example, asserts something; makes a statement of some kind about an inherited past, and acts by intuitive vision. The product of a composer's vision is built on stylistic heritage because while possessing elements of style and import of its own, s/he bequeaths an altered heritage. The stylistic heritage becomes the building model and may be seen as general procedures, which conditions the composer's intuitive choice and invention, or the general (universal) that limits the particular, which includes the relevant available resources, and the essential context of creation (Udoh, 2012). In the same culture, Kohs (1980) while expressing his view on style dilates that:

> The word 'style' covers a number of different ideas, and includes such matters as: a) whether the work is tonal, modal, and so forth; b) whether it is diatonic or chromatic; c) whether it is polyphonic, homophonic, or a combination of the two; d) the harmonic vocabulary used, and the extent to which chords are functional or non-functional; e) the types of non-harmonic tones used or preferred; f) whether the work is 'absolute' (concert) music or functional (for dance, theatre, cinema, television) (in Udoh, 2012, p. 68).

As much as Kohs is referring to style in Western art music; however, he has provided the fundamentals of what constitutes style in music irrespective of specific cultural contextualisation. In other words, the basic consideration that guides the evaluation of styles will depend on what the society under study regards as music and the circumstances behind the practices or use of such music. On the contrary, Nettl (1964, p. 166) observes that the ideal description of style may be a completely unattainable goal, in view of the many questions and

problems, which must be solved in the course of such a study. This contradictory posture could sometimes be justified when descriptions of musical styles are applied to all cultures, tribes, or nations, because there are exceptions, as diverse cultures constitute specific ideas of the kind of expected and unexpected phenomena. It is necessary therefore, that each culture sets its system of musical description and stylistic framework (or content) according to its musical meaning,use, or function as universality in music meaning is problematic.

Between Content and Style

In musical terminology, the distinction is sometimes made between content and style. Although these two aspects of music are logically inseparable, there are examples taken from observation of cultural dynamics, which indicate that each may have a kind of its own, or each is capable of changing by itself. By content, we mean, of course, the cultural fundamental and traditions, the substance that define a musical practice. By style, as discussed earlier, we mean the aggregate of characteristics that a musical genre *per se* has, or what it shares or differs from other musical practices in its cultural complex. For instance, in Ibibio culture, content includes assessing what makes the music of Ikon (xylophone) different from Uta (horns or gourd) in the same community, not in terms of musical instruments but stylistic factors and how they function within the same cultural milieu. This means that style signifies the uniqueness of the two musical practices as a symbolic expression of the Ibibio music traditions, it builds its divergence with other cultural genres such as Yoruba *Dundun*, *Bata,*or *Sekere* musical practices, and so on. Akpabot(1986) while arguing for content and style in Ibibio cultural practices, observes that

> Different ethnic groups in Nigeria have distinctive oral traditions, which are not unconnected with their particular societal behavioural patterns. The Hausas and Fulanis, for example, have a rich tradition of powerful emirates which, equated with a strong Islamic religion, influences the style and content of their oral poetry. The Yorubas and Binis have a history of stirring battles for kingdoms which haveproduced many war heros and powerful Obas, and their oral poetry reflects this. The Ibibios are not so much concerned with wars and Kingdom as with purity, morality, and a benevolent Supreme Being which factors dictate the style and content of their poetry (p. 70).

Relatively, Akpabot establishes in his assertion what could be assessed as a cultural paradigm and meaning formations in different Nigerian ethnic domains, which incorporates musical form, style, and content. On the whole, form is the structure of style, whereas content is the shaping factor in the style of the musical practice. Thus, content dictates style, style is shaped by form (structure), and content serves as the cultural base for style. Essentially, the musical content may remain constant, and the stylistic traits change depending on the culturally defined conventions supporting the concept in community-based traditions of 'Unity in Diversity' or "Change and Continuity". Therefore, in indigenous (community-based) musical practices, the notion of 'identity'refers directly to musical content, while diversity speaks of style and stylistic variations. In the same way, change speaks of variations and continuity expresses an identity with the past.

Interestingly, identity brings us to the reality of belonging. And as Mckerrell (2016) notes "Traditional music in today's world is about belonging: belonging to a community of musicians, singers, a culture, a particular nationality or ethnicity. But belonging also implies that there are those who do not belong" (p. 4). Next to identity and belonging is the notion of authenticity.

Thus, authenticity implies that there are true or sincere ways of identity and belonging and that some performance practices are more authentic than others depending on several stylistic factors. In this sense, authenticity is a plural concept. This means what is authentic for one performer or listener may be on the very edge of acceptable practice for another.

Modelling Localised Reading of Community-Based Musical Performances

In the Nigerian milieu, there is a diversity of cultures and subcultures that create a challenging notion of identity and authenticity because there are several belongings occasioned by ethnicities, religions, and sometimes socio-political, and so on. McKerrell (2016) observes that people who belong to the Nigerian kind of society are continuously engaging in a social process of negotiation of belonging.The implication is that what is authentic or not is key to this sense of negotiated belonging and is a factor of different kinds of belongings which must be read from localised perspectives in every music performance. Ammer (1987) notes that many factors, such as personal and historical influence the style of both performance and what the listeners make of music. In addition, Adedeji (2004b, p. 76) identifies two main characteristics: 1) Old, primitive, and less adventurous styles, and 2) Creative, restless, and dynamic styles with inherent radicalism and syncretism.

These two tendencies were prominent when examining Adedeji's characterisation among performers of Ibibio community-based musical practices. However, there is a seeming blend in the creative and dynamic style. It was revealed that the difference between the less adventurous and the creative styles is because of some factors such as human factors — age and acculturative tendencies of members. For instance, the human factor — the age of members of Uta Cultural Troupe, Ikot Akpan Ishiet in Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State whose performance is still old, and less adventurous, with the youngest member being about 25 years, is completely different. Whereas the greater number of members who form the majority are within the age brackets of (45 -70 years), the leader of the group is above 70 years (as of the year of the conducting the interview). Chief Monday William Udo, the leader of this troupe identifies other musical groups as"Ntuk Umana Afa" (little children of yesterday) meaning – a young generation. He explains,

> What we do in Uta today, in our group is a continuation of the tradition of our ancestors. Introducing other elements into Uta because we want it to look new is a digression from the practices handed down to us by our forefathers, so we have to keep those traditions alive. My grandfather, who taught Uta music in my dream, is still alive and I do not want to disappoint him. Maybe, one day, after we are all dead and gone, another generation may introduce something strange bearing the name of our group. Nevertheless, as long as we are here, our ancestors must feel a sense of belonging in what we do in *Mbre Uta* (Personal communication, August 2010 quoted in Udoh 2012).

It is noteworthy that the musical practices of Uta Dance performed by youthful members at the Akwa Ibom State Council for Arts and Culture, Obio Offot, in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State possesses a highly creative, restless, and dynamic style with inherent radicalism and syncretism. The leader, Akaninyene Udo, is still in his late thirties, while the most elderly member the Unit head, Ime Paul is in his late forties. Perhaps, by their experiences with other sub-cultures in Nigeria, and as the State Council for Arts and Culture, they have witnessed several stylistic elements that have formed variants of diversity in their musico-cultural manifestations. In

addition, members of the State Council for Art and Culture in Akwa Ibom State have been selected from Uta groups from various villages with their multi-dimensional experiences. More importantly, in the Ibibio society, several events, factors, and influences, including foreign elements contribute to the continuous emergence of stylistic properties in the continuously changing lifestyle of the people. These factors are highlighted below because they contribute to what the music communicates, and the meanings alluded to their practices.

Historical Factor: Historically, Udo (1983) explains postcoloniality about the Ibibio that the traditional, political, economic, and religious institutions were thrown into disarray, and men of little social and political standing replaced the traditional rulers. Children and elderly people who were working on the farm were removed and sent to school; individualism in the Western world was introduced against communalism. This created a new elitist system that developed disrespect for the traditional authorities and rulers as they (the elitist class) assumed an unexpected level of importance in the land. Many things collapsed due to the introduction of Western culture in what Chinua Achebe couched *Things Fall Apart*. For instance, there was no attention paid to Chiefs as they were considered individuals caring for themself, their wives, and children. The implication of such changes can be seen in the dynamics of modern society, where traditional institutions are repudiated by government institutions. Recently, there were rumours of a ban on the *Ekpo* masquerade (spirit manifest) by the Police in Akwa Ibom State within certain communities.

In the Ibibio pre-colonial traditions, Ekpo masquerades (spirit manifest) were regarded as representatives of the gods of the land. Today, such beliefs are held by African Traditional Religion (ATR) practitioners. Besides, such rumours on spirit-manifest have implications for the modernistic values of *Ekpo* activities, whether ritualistic or ceremonial, and what they communicate in the modern Ibibio society. Another important historical anecdote in the Ibibio society is the concern for morality and the purity of the marriage institution. This was communicated by the various women's institutions such as *Iban Isọŋ, Iban Ebre, Mbopo,* and *Asian Uboikpa* in the pre-colonial communities. Today, marriage as an institution is flouted, and taboos of sex are thrown overboard as some women have no fear of reprisal from *Ekpo nkawo* (Mother Earth deities or ancestral spirits) under the new dispensation of Christianity. Umanah (2010) has reported that part of the problem was the fact that the Christian missionaries taught their converts/adherents that there was no power in traditional rites such as *Mbiam* (oath-taking) and that the purity rituals for young girls (Mbopo) including the ceremonies of fattening of girls ended as the Christian missionaries preached against it (p. 25). The various changes in the culture of the Ibibio people contributed to a change in musical style. For example, most of the rituals and ceremonies of the pre-colonial Ibibio society have changed, but most songs have been maintained. For example, the *Mbopo*song:

Mmeda Uyaindeppe, (I have come with beauty)

Uyai Mbopoadeppe. (The beauty of Mbopo has appeared).

could be contextualized literarily, by its literal transliteration above. However, the song represents the past whereas the reality of its context is not outward beauty, but holistic beauty of womanhood/motherhood enunciated by different dimensions of purity such as home-maker, submissiveness, cook, caregiver, adviser, peace-builder, and many other qualities, which manifest as outward beauty for women.Thus, the stylistic nuances of the song are vital in its meanings and what it communicates to society in the past, present, and future.The stylistic element in the song is wound up in a historical trajectory, but its context/situation and content, from the familiar realm of beauty, is intricate because *Uyai* (beauty) in Ibibio's precolonial context was never outward attractiveness. To buttress this dimension of cultural meaning and its

communication agency, Seeger (1999) regards musical performance and stylistic variations as the main point of reference in the research into indigenous musical practice:

> History is a subjective perception of the past from the present perspective.... Events do not occur simply, per se; events are always created and interpreted by the community it is developed in. Members of a community hence create their past, present and their vision of the future, partly through musical performance. (quoted in Udoh 2012, p. 75).

Cultural Factor: The culture of any indigenous society is driven by four basic characteristics. First, culture is symbolic. Symbols are essential to culture in that they are the media for the storage and transmission of large quantities of information that constitute culture, and its model of meaning and what they communicate. Secondly, culture is learned and does not depend upon biological inheritance through its transmission, hence, the belief that "we are African not because we are born in Africa; rather we are African because Africa is born in us" is a reflection on cultural integration and adaptation.Third, culture is a composite system that is shared by the members of the society, and is considered collectively rather than individually. While the extent to which various individuals may internalize or conform to the pattern of their culture may differ, a culture by definition is representative of the collective ideals of members in a society. Lastly, culture is integrated. This means that the various parts and components of culture tend to fit together in such a way that they are consistent with one another, despite the conflicts, frictions, or contradictions that are also present. In this sense, the music of any culture, in the Nigerian context, should be seen by these basic characteristics. For example, culture focuses on the local community's musical life, making it possible to differentiate and understand what the music communicates. There are many instances of local or indigenous Nigerian musical performances that show traces of music they adopted from different sources (Arabic/Islam, European/Christian). Thus, the music carries nuances of external and internal stylistic elements. Meaning and communication are articulated by these characteristics. The cultural mores and shared traditions provide the indigenous musical practitioner with the modus operandi for their activities. In Nigerian society, the blend between foreign and indigenous musical practices has formed the legacies of many stylistic elements in ethnic-based music. The implication is that even when popular musicians attempt to create something new, they consciously model their creativity according to their indigenous cultural group and are expected to behave, and recreate musical practices according to the dictates of their immediate or shared culture.What this means is that as a behavioural activity, music has to be perceived in relationship to the conventions and mores of its cultural milieu. This perception and societal pressure provide the formative concept that leads to stylistic enactment. Udoh (2012) observes that "Being a musician means behaving according to culturally defined values" (p. 87).

Musical Factor: In Ibibio, music is a multiplex that comprises *ikwo* (song), *unek* (dance), *mbine* (instrumentation), and body arts or costumes. Embedded in the song, for example, is poetry and proverbs. Dance combines rhythmic responses and body motion. Thus, the organisation of any music in traditional society is governed by the aesthetic use of sound and silence, repetition and contrast, and creativity, which creates a diversity of styles (Aleshinskaya, 2016). Blacking (1976), in his study of the music of the Venda, explains that since music is a humanly organized sound, one aspiring for musical understanding in a cultural society should endeavour to search for the relationship between patterns of human organisation and the patterns of sound produced as a result of organised interactions. He notes further that:

> The production of the patterns of sound which the Venda calls music depends, first, on the continuity of the social groups who perform it and, second, on the way the members of those groups relate to each other. … The function of music in society may be the decisive factor promoting or inhibiting latent musical ability, as well as affecting the choice of cultural concepts and materials with which to compose music (Udoh, 2012, p. 76).

In other words, the function of music in a society determines specific musical practices, stylistic tendencies, and meanings created for and by it. In this context, to explain the basis of identity within a community-based practice, stylistic modules, and the effects of its change and continuity, we must understand the relationship between music and human experience in its cultural milieu.Apart from music constituting what Blacking has described as 'humanly organized sounds', Nzewi (2003) presents a concept of music that models the Ibibio paradigms and deviates sharply from the Eurocentric meaning and absolute treatment of sound to a composite system of musical arts. Nzewi explains that:

> The musical arts are organized and structured on a communal principle that provides secure social and psychological support for members to explore individual merits and capabilities without anxiety. This is the social meaning of chorus-solo structures that are prevalent in African musical arts cultures. The African philosophy and principle underpinning communal and/or group action provide that the chorus is more important than the solo, and has to, as such, structure, affirm and guide solo activity. Therefore, the term 'solo-chorus' does not reflect the African relational principle. When the chorus (community) is not steady and constant, the individual (soloist) has no security. The individual could, of course, initiate or announce the action. The chorus, as a consensus, endorses and secures it (Nzewi, 2003, p. 15-16).

Although Nzewi does not directly support Blacking's view on humanly organized sounds, he has emphasised the integrative or simultaneous systems that define cultural meaning. The integrative systems comprise sonic objects (music), aesthetic/poetic stylisation, and dance. In addition, the measured stylisation of spoken language (poetry and lyrics), the metaphorical reflection of life and cosmos displayed in action (drama), and symbolised text and décor embodied in material objects (costumes and scenery) all constitute the African musical arts matrix. Until these factors are considered, the reading of meaning in music becomes eccentric, and in most cases, communication is hindered.

Geographical Factor: Let me focus on musical instruments and dance. To a large extent, vegetation determines the musical instrument to be found in each geographical region (Euba, 1960; Nketia, 1974). For example, the Ibibio landscape of rain forest has an abundance of wooden musical instruments: *ikon* (xylophone), *obodom* (slit drum), *ibid* (drums), *ntakro*k (woodblock), *nkrok* (secondary timeline), and many others. As one interlocutor has noted, the organological composition of the Ibibio indigenous instrument is a product of its geographical location. He added that the stylistic movement in dances is becoming, is in reality to its riverine environment (Personal Communication, January 15, 2021). Meanwhile, there are examples showing the galloping dance patterns of the Hausa (and Fulani) like horses, the possessive cock-like display dance patterns of the Yoruba, and the Zebra-like costume pattern of the Benue (Tiv) society, which are stylistic elements that are geographically determined.

Socio-Anthropological Factor: This factor combines all other factors listed so far. It illustrated that the life of a society is reflected in its traditional musical practices. This is obvious in the context where costumes are typical of the dress code of the Ibibio people. For example, all human societies have been curious about how their customs originated and the differences between their own culture and neighbouring societies. In a sense, the Ibibio people construct their anthropologies around real and imagined beliefs. Nevertheless, even when they were founded partly on accurate observation, the interpretations put forward most often remained on the level of myth, beliefs, and what the society counts as values.

Metaphysical Factor: This metaphysical expression is illustrated in allusion to musical styles and practices through dreams and spiritual sources. In most cases, we find practitioners who lay claims to a continuation of the practices of the ancestor whom they communicate with through dreams, in forming both song repertoires and instruments.

Civilization/Acculturation factor: Education, modernity, and contacts with other influential religions and cultures have produced a diversity of forms and styles hence, they play prominent roles in the emergence or development of some styles. Education and modernity have definitely affected the perception and creativity of some musical performances. Thus, today, we find changes in taste, flavour, and ideals from simple to sophisticated, elegant, and more florid stylistic nuances in both singing and performance all in a bid to suit newer audiences.

Economic Factor: Acceptability and patronage for the purpose of profitability have constituted a major factor in determining what the indigenous musicians do since they want to be patronised. This factor sets the tone for the emergence of stylistic elements to gratify the yearning of its audience. For example, there are full-time musicians everywhere around us who make their earnings and livelihood from their music. It is important to note that such musicians will continue to adjust the content of their music according to the changes in their locality. The implication is that the musician seeks patronage from the public, and to ensure his relevance, certain compromises have to be made to stay in business.

Talent, Skills, and Aesthetic Factors: Adedeji (2004) asserts that talent and skills as factors determine individual styles mostly when an artiste is gifted musically and/or has acquired musical skills, the stylistic arrangement, compositional techniques/styles, and performance mannerisms are all dynamic, creative and original. He adds further that the artiste could create his/her own styles within the colossus of styles, thus, creating individual stylistic techniques and idiosyncratic peculiarities (p. 76). As is the case in other societies of the world, music and musical styles in Ibibio communities have aesthetic values. Aesthetics are the attributes of art that make it good, and these attributes are culturally constructed. People's values, preferences, and tastes are strongly tied to cultural factors, such as worldview, economics, gender, history, age, and family. In the Ibibio society, Music is always seen as inseparable from human existence. It carries long traditions and values or meanings associated with the people and represents part of their identity. Hence, a positive response to the aesthetic value of musical concepts occurs when the musicians link everyday existence to values and traditions in relation to their creative and stylistic idiosyncrasies.

Conclusion

In today's world, even in the Nigerian context, what constitutes meaning or communicates cultural models of identity in music is conditioned by several factors. The importance of style,

and how styles intertwine with several factors to model localized agency of cultural meaning cannot be underestimated. As highlighted in the article, the performer's style in community-based music is influenced by talent and diverse experiences, which aid reading and communication and are influenced by the history or the music of the past, and the contemporary realities, including a sense of belonging. Comparatively, other musical cultures in Nigeria can be contextualized into the surface descriptions of the musical practices of the people of Ibibio. For example, a dual nature and stylistic framework and characteristics showing past and present, with an invented model of different belongings are common in all cultures. Each stylistic framework is strengthened by its function in the culture, and the relativity of its performers to the tenets of their forbears amidst challenging cultural diversities, which over time have been affected by age, experience, and history. The factors are constituents of identity and belonging, at least, by the way and manner in which music meanings are created, contextualised, and communicated.

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